

10 Consumer behaviour

Activities

Understanding the text: claims and assumptions

- 1** What is a claim? What is an assumption? Write a definition for each of these terms.
- 2 a** Look at this sentence from a student's essay on consumer behaviour. What are the underlying assumptions in the statement?

Multinational companies should modify the marketing strategies that they use for each of the three main class groups – lower, middle and upper – since these groups are distinct in their consumer behaviour.

- b** Look at Exhibit 13.3 in the Unit 10 text. What is the problem with the student's statement above?
- 3** Read the Unit 10 text (to the end of *Other indicators of social class*) and answer these questions.
- 1 According to the authors, is the practice of categorizing people according to their social class positive or negative?
 - 2 What factor affects the quantity of people within a social class?
 - 3 What are the key characteristics of the upper, middle and lower classes? Summarize the ideas in the text.
 - 4 How do the social classes influence each other?
 - 5 What three reasons are given to explain why social class is not decided by income? Use your own words to explain.
 - 6 Would an occupation (e.g. an engineer) hold the same status in every country? Why? / Why not?
 - 7 What kind of life does a well-educated person have?
 - 8 In what ways can family background influence a person's social class?
- 4** Think about the claims that have been made in the Unit 10 text. Select three of them. What assumptions have been made? Make a note of them.

Example: *The text assumes that one occupation (e.g. chef) always carries the same level or status. In reality, a person working as a part-time chef in a café would have less 'status' than a top chef working in a very famous restaurant.*

- 5** Now read the final paragraph *Social class indexes*, where the authors evaluate the claims, and answer these questions.
- 1 Do you agree with the authors' comments?
 - 2 What are the problems of categorizing people according to social class? Summarize in your own words.

Language focus: comparison and contrast

- 6 a** Read the section *Types of social-class systems* again. Make a list of the vocabulary used to compare and contrast.
- b** Can you add any more vocabulary to the list?

7 Complete these sentences using comparative expressions. You can use the ideas from the text to help you.

- 1 The upper classes in most countries are alike, since they are usually inward-looking than the other classes.
- 2 The middle classes are the aspirational, and so have a tendency to copy the higher classes.
- 3 the other classes, the lower class is the likely to dress, behave and live differently.
- 4 the middle classes all aim for a better life, the way they achieve that tends to differ.
- 5 Both the lower and middle classes spend money on furniture, the middle classes spend money on home furnishings.

Using the text:
summarizing from
multiple sources

- 8 a Read the two paragraphs below, which define key characteristics of the lower, upper and middle classes, and underline any information relating to the lower (or working) classes.**
- b Compare and contrast the information given about the lower classes. Does Paragraph B support or contradict Paragraph A?**
- c Write a summary of the behaviour typical of the lower classes. Remember to reference the information that you use.**

A (Fisher, 2011)

To generalize, the world of the working class (i.e. the lower-middle class) is more intimate and constricted. For example, working-class men are likely to name local sports figures as heroes and are less likely to take long holidays to out-of-the-way places (Durgee, 1986). Immediate needs, such as a new refrigerator or TV, tend to dictate buying behaviour, whereas the higher classes focus on more long-term goals, such as saving for university tuition or retirement (Halliday, 2000). Working-class consumers depend heavily on relatives for emotional support and tend to orient themselves in terms of the local community rather than the world at large. They are more likely to be conservative and family oriented. Maintaining the appearance of one's home and property is a priority, regardless of the size of the house.

B (Hoyer and Macinnis, 2010)

Interestingly, the upper classes in most societies are more similar to each other than they are to other classes within their own countries because the upper classes tend to be more cosmopolitan and international in orientation. The lower classes, on the other hand, are the most likely to be culture-bound and tend to be the most different from the other classes in terms of lifestyle, dress and eating behaviours. The middle classes are most likely to borrow from other classes because this practice may represent a means of achieving upward social mobility.

Critical thinking:
evaluating evidence

9 Read this paragraph and answer the questions below.

The middle classes are the most aspirational of all the classes; they are more likely to borrow behaviour from other classes as they aim for a better life (Fisher, 2011). Therefore, this class does not have an identity of its own, and so would not be of interest to marketers.

- 1 Is the evidence relevant to the conclusion drawn?
- 2 Does it follow logically?
- 3 Are there any underlying assumptions?
- 4 Could a different conclusion be reached on the same evidence?